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> The pampered native of St Kilda may with reason refuse to change his situation; finding his amusement where his chief occupation lies, in the pursuit of sea fowl, that constitute at the same time his game, his luxury, and a considerable part of his wealth. Free from the reputed evils of law, physic, politics, and taxes; living under a patriarchal government, among a social circle of his relations; in a mild climate, without knowledge of a higher state of things; if he thinks not his island an Utopia, the pursuit of happiness is indeed a dream. (MacCulloch, 1819, pp. 29–30)

1 What I want to consider in this article is the way the Hebridean archipelago of St Kilda and its inhabitants were described in the only two fictional films ever made about life in these islands, in spite of a large number of documentaries. These are *The Edge of the World* (1937) directed by the English director Michael Powell and *Ill Fares the Land* (1983) by the Scottish playwright Bill Bryden (also, at that time, associate director at the Royal National Theatre). What will be demonstrated is that the directors, even though they both tackled the same event, namely the evacuation of the archipelago in 1930, had very different objectives in doing so. I will then consider how distance and contact zones are used in order in these films to describe the encounter between islanders and mainlanders and how they tried to give voice to the islanders.

St Kilda and the creation of a myth

2 The archipelago of St Kilda is a group of islands some 110 miles off the West coast of Scotland. Despite its apparent proximity, reaching it and disembarking in treacherous waters once proved its visitors' maritime prowess and soon became a rite of passage that allowed the recipient the right to explore the islands. It was first extensively described in a famous travel writing account published in 1698 by Martin Martin. Martin spent three weeks on Hirta—the main island of the archipelago and the only

inhabited one—where he accompanied the Reverend James Campbell on a mission to rid the island of a false prophet. He then enthusiastically reported, first in an article and then in a book, on the social characteristics of a native population whose customs and ways of life were so remote from those on the mainland that the one hundred and eighty islanders had developed a society where there was neither currency nor hierarchical organization. Originally from the Isle of Skye, Martin, as a native Gaelic speaker and a graduate from the University of Edinburgh, was extremely well equipped for discussing with the islanders and reporting their life and customs. His very detailed account presents how the St Kildans lived in self-sufficiency and insisted on their egalitarian social organization: crops and fowl and eggs were shared between the families. So too were the boats they possessed, and work was also fairly distributed within the community. Bartering was the only known means of exchange and rents were paid in kind. Contacts with the mainlanders were few and far between as the archipelago bore neither a strategic nor an economic interest for Great Britain. Martin's lively account, however, started a vogue that increased exponentially with the appearance of steamboats a century and a half later. Amongst his many hyperbolic statements about the islanders, one can read:

> The inhabitants of St. Kilda, are much happier than the generality of mankind, as being almost the only people in the world who feel the sweetness of true liberty: what the condition of the people in the Golden Age is feign'd by the poets to be, that theirs really is, I mean, in innocency and simplicity, purity, mutual love and cordial friendship, free from solicitous cares and anxious covetousness; from envy, deceit, and dissimulation; from ambition and pride, and the consequences that attend them.
> [...]
> There is this only wanting to make them the happiest people in this habitable globe, *viz.* that they themselves do not know how happy they are, and how much they are above the avarice and slavery of the rest of mankind. Their way of living makes them contemn gold and silver, as below the dignity of human nature; they live by the munificence of heaven, and have no designs upon one another, but such as are purely suggested by justice and benevolence. (Martin, 1698, pp. 131–2)

3 What Martin's compelling narrative did was to invest St Kilda with the fabulous characteristics of a Golden Age metanarrative, endowing the archipelago and its inhabitants with a special status. Most of the visitors were totally enraptured by what they saw, and most of them made sure that they *only* caught a glimpse of what corresponded to Martin's descriptions. Even if some tourists were deeply concerned about the precarious health situation of the natives, or their notorious lack of hygiene, others, on the contrary, were happy to mock the St Kildans' antiquated way of life and their distrust of progress. St Kilda allowed British antiquarians, scientists and visitors the possibility to explore an island in British territorial waters which seemed peculiarly out of time, thus recalling the unconventional mores and customs that British travellers were keen to report in the distant oversea colonies.

4 The last thirty-six inhabitants of St Kilda eventually decided to petition the British government in 1930 in order to request their repatriation to mainland Britain. What was probably surprising was that this was a resolution issuing from the natives themselves, and not an imperial decision from London. Great Britain had indeed always seemed to be tolerant or, more exactly, totally indifferent towards the fate of the inhabitants of St Kilda: the St Kildans never paid taxes. There was no electoral register and no man from St Kilda was ever called up to serve in the British army,

notwithstanding the fact that the inhabitants were included in British censuses and that a Post Office was set up on the main island of the archipelago in 1899.

5 St Kilda is now a nature reserve and has been uninhabited for nearly eighty years, except for some scientists, military engineers and large bird colonies. Research and conservation are run by the National Trust for Scotland, the Scottish National Heritage and the Ministry of Defence but the archipelago also holds a rare dual World Heritage site status (natural, 1986, and cultural, 2005). St Kilda has however occupied a peculiar position in popular imagination in Scotland since Martin's books and it continues to fascinate: its fate seems to symbolize the disappearance of unique and somehow primitive societies in the face of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century spread of tourism, commerce and urbanization and it has indeed often been used as an example for the loss of indigenous voices. Cinema was bound to take an interest in issues regarding St Kilda and the development of this island community, even though the very small number of fictional films highlights the difficulty of finding suitable plots for feature films.

St Kilda and the directors' objectives

6 Both directors wrote their own scripts, but both had different ambitions for their films. *The Edge of the World* was Michael Powell's first feature film. Even though he was not a newcomer to British cinema—having shot a score of "quota quickies" between 1931 and 1936 (Chibnall, 2007, pp. 207–31)—this film was fundamental to his career and had a substantial impact on his personal life. The director later confessed to having been fascinated by islands in general, and by the 1930 evacuation of St Kilda in particular (Powell, 2000, pp. 225–6 and p. 254). Powell's idea was first and foremost artistic: he meant to use the dramatic setting of the jagged shoreline in order to bring to the fore a poignant story about friendship and love. But the underlying theme in this movie is the fate of small islands and their likely depopulation. Because Lord Dumfries, who was then the proprietor of St Kilda, refused him the right to shoot the film on location in the archipelago, Powell resorted to spending five months on Foula (in the Shetland islands) and to employing the few local islanders as extras to shoot *The Edge of the World* in 1936. It is also because of these precarious shooting conditions, which included a storm that forced the director, the actors and the technicians to spend some extra weeks on Foula, that this film is well known. The spell it cast on the director and his team was so strong that Powell (1990) devoted a book to recount their experience on Foula. Towards the end of his life, he also shot a twenty-three-minute television documentary about revisiting this Shetland island (*Return to the Edge of the World*) with some of the actors who were still alive (Powell, 1978).

7 *The Edge of the World* tells the story of a St Kilda native, Andrew Gray (played by Niall McGinnis). We first discover him as a helmsman for some wealthy English tourists (played by Michael Powell and his future wife, Frankie Reidy) on a cruise in the Hebrides. They find themselves close to St Kilda and, after reluctantly disembarking on the island, Andrew Gray discovers the gravestone of Peter Manson who died while the evacuation was taking place. Andrew then remembers the life he spent on the island as a young man; his love for a woman, called Ruth Manson (Peter Manson's daughter), and the death of Ruth's brother, Robbie, during a climbing race. It is this accidental death, for which Andrew feels responsible, that prompted his decision to leave the community

before the evacuation took place, unaware that Ruth was pregnant. The film is a flashback, Andrew Gray contemplating old memories of his life on St Kilda and, in a way, searching for unspeakable secrets about people's relationships on the island. It shows the community's constant fight for survival and the younger generations' misgivings about their future, as well as the debates that lead to the decision to evacuate the archipelago in 1930. *The Edge of the World*, because of the way it portrays the islanders and their daily life, was sometimes compared to Robert Flaherty's ethnofictions or fictional documentaries and, more specifically, to Flaherty's 1934 *Man of Aran*. There is no doubt that there is a very thin line between documentaries about St Kilda and these fictional films, as there has always been a thin line between travel writing accounts and fiction in the literature about the archipelago. This was, however, an analogy that Powell strongly objected to: he was adamant that his film was not a documentary about life on an island (Powell, 2000, p. 241). What he wanted to illustrate in his movie were the sentiments that tie people together on what may appear—in spite of its beauty—a very unhospitable location. Powell is keen to show how life organizes itself and how love, jealousy or feelings of animosity develop in such a microsociety that first gives the impression of being only regulated by the climate and by the elements. The accidental deaths of Robbie Manson and Peter Manson—who, like his son, fell off a cliff—remind the islanders of this intimate communion with nature and the elements. But the evacuation plunges them into another dimension as they are forced to leave their ancestral home.

8 Bill Bryden's *Ill Fares the Land* can, at first, be considered in the same vein as Powell's film. It tackles some similar themes, such as the evacuation and the discussions within the community that lead to the abandonment of the island; it also shares the classic structure of an Aristotelian tragedy with *The Edge of the World*: characters and plot arouse pity. However, despite these similarities, both films are different as far as their directors' objectives are concerned. Bill Bryden, contrary to Powell whose aim was above all the telling of a dramatic love story, is scrupulously faithful to historical accounts. The Scottish playwright insisted on the reliability of his film and never openly rejected any of the ethnofiction aspects that could have been deduced from his adherence to authenticity: "[It is] fiction based upon fact [...] most of what happens in the film happened." (Sussex, 1982, p. 40) The director went as far as making sure that the surnames and first names of the characters are authentic and correspond to these of the St Kildans who left their island in 1930, even though the sources he consulted may appear as equivocal. Bryden indeed acknowledges the help of a television producer turned historian, Tom Steel, in the final credits of his film and it is possible to identify some scenes as being adapted from passages in Steel's book (for example, when a trawler approaches St Kilda after a flu epidemic: Bryden, 37' [Steel, 2011, pp. 171–2 and pp. 175–6]). However, Steel's book on St Kilda has often been condemned for its lack of objectivity and, sometimes, sketchy historicity. The name of the protagonist of the film, for example, does not correspond to that of an islander present during the 1930 evacuation: Neil Gillies is indeed the name of a St Kildan who left St Kilda as a boy in 1919, Steel confusing Neil Gillies with a Norman John Gillies (Steel, 2011, p. 25; see also Quine, 1988, pp. 34–9). Such oversight was echoed by Bryden in his film.

9 *Ill Fares the Land* deals with the disappearance of the St Kilda community through the eyes of the young Neil Gillies. Neil Gillies' adult comments are often heard as a voice-over in order to describe situations or, in a pedagogical vein, to reveal traditions, clarify circumstances or explain local issues. Bryden therefore employs a technique

close to the one Powell used in *The Edge of the World*: a flashback, but this time it is an older character, nonetheless never seen, describing what happened in the archipelago and sometimes offering his analysis of the situation, for example commenting the evacuation with hindsight and, as a concluding lament, repeating twice the mournful pronouncement: "It was as if we were running away." (*Ill Fares the Land*, 100'00"; 100'20") The abandonment of the island assumes the symbolism of a day of reckoning for the population of St Kilda: the atmosphere is gloomy on the boat. Such scenes of departure were not shown by Powell for whom the abandonment of St Kilda was more of a personal tragedy for the Manson family. In an allegorical dimension, *The Edge of the World* had to be envisaged as the illustration of the fate of small islands. In *Ill Fares the Land*, faces look distraught and groans and sobs are only interrupted by castigation and Biblical exclamations. Bryden's sometimes heavy-handed symbolism portrays the St Kildans' passage as crossing the Styx on Charon's boat. They will only be greeted by boos and sneers when disembarking on the mainland. *Ill Fares the Land* has sometimes been categorized as an ideological movie, belonging to "a tradition of implicit Socialist elegy [...]" (Le Fanu, 1983, p. 43). These comments can be explained by the film's apparent glorification of an Edenic vision of a primitive world and its apparent condemnation of the British industrial society embodied by tourists visiting St Kilda. Even if it is difficult to deny such a point of view, it is however reductive to consider Bryden's film only in a radical light. What Bryden examines, in a film full of pathos, is the demise of a traditional community due to evolution external changes and medical progress. Contrary to Powell's, whose objectives were to explore the characters' emotions and their connections to their environment, Bryden wants to show the reactions of a community and its eventual fragmentation and self-destruction. The viewer finds themselves inevitably drawn to the St Kilda villagers because the simplicity of the direction and the quality of the acting are on a par with their heartrending story.

10 Bryden's point of view, contrary to Powell's, is to be close as possible to that of an anthropologist, albeit biased, showing us as accurately as he can the events that led to the 1930 evacuation. By scrupulously showing the last few years of the archipelago's history, Bryden also wants to debunk the St Kilda Golden Age myth carefully woven by Martin and many of the travel writers who followed him. Life on St Kilda was not as easy and straightforward as what is described in a lot of these accounts. However, one may perceive that the fatalistic tone adopted in this film is a reinforcement of one of the St Kilda myths: the inescapable and relentless role of progress and its burden on primitive communities that had to comply and adapt or otherwise disappear. Mainland characters such, as Nurse Williamina Barclay (played by Morag Hood) and the Labour Under-Secretary of State for Scotland Tom Johnston (played by Robert Stephens), are introduced towards the end of the film. Their behaviours and dialogues stress how external forces—the British government—impinge on the islanders' life. The fate of the archipelago has now assumed a political dimension, the nurse caustically reminding the Secretary of State for Scotland: "That's your chance, isn't it? The new Labour man, changing the world." (*Ill Fares the Land*, 87'56")

11 The underlying question in Bryden's film is, indeed, whether there were other options allowing the St Kildans to remain in their archipelago. Opposition to the evacuation is raised by some islanders while they discuss their situation with nurse Barclay, whom Bryden is keen to present as the initiator of the evacuation and as its most vocal champion. She explains to the St Kildans that their situation is not sustainable,

primarily because of health concerns; she thus provides a scientific voice to sentiments that a lot of islanders had already felt and sometimes expressed. However, nobody offers any alternative and the few people who want to remain on the island eventually fall in with the nurse's arguments and the weight of the silent majority: they draft their request to the British government under her guidance. Williamina Barclay plays a pivotal role for the islanders: from the mainland, but living on the island, she is one of the two characters who act as an interface between the two societies. Both her and an islander, called Willie Macdonald, personify this indefinable zone of contact where the islanders meet the mainlanders' gaze and appraisal and where symbolic distance becomes magnified.

Distance and contact zones

12 Distance is indeed a key to appreciating the fascination the St Kilda archipelago held for visitors and tourists; it is therefore not surprising that this is the issue around which the two film directors built their narratives. Long shots of the immense sea surrounding the island intensify in both films the feelings of remoteness and of the islanders' complete isolation. Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 479) referred to the sea as an equivocal space of distance and this is precisely the geographical and symbolic distance separating two communities in the same country, Great Britain, that increased curiosity and interest before eventually—and paradoxically—proving fatal to human life in the archipelago. Even if the St Kilda residents are—because of their confined location—not nomadic, this island location can be considered as a smooth space, to use Deleuze and Guattari's parlance: this is a locus where the mainlanders' laws and traditional social constraints are absent. The St Kilda community probably even lived for a long time totally unaware of the nature of regulations and precepts, their only experience of such procedures being the annual visit of the landlord's factor to collect their rents in kind. As Martin recalls when he visited the archipelago, the concept and the use of writing were foreign to them: they regarded this series of striated signs on a sheet of paper as utterly pointless. It would not change anything or improve their life (Martin, 1698, p. 124). But sedentary forces, or striated forces, will eventually come to St Kilda and will finally overcome their resistance: first with maps and cartography—and it is here interesting to remember that one of the possible etymological explanations for the name of the archipelago may lay in the misreading of a map (Coates, 1990, pp. 55–6)—before eventually criss-crossing the natives' universe. This striated pattern will steadily increase, first with the early nineteenth century's naturalists flocking to St Kilda to sketch its native birds and then with steamboats whose wakes and waves draw lines in the Atlantic Ocean. The rules and regulations of the striated—the urban and sedentary—will be imported to St Kilda and this will eventually result in the 1930 evacuation of the island.

13 Cinema is indeed a means of abolishing that geographical distance and of allowing us to share a character's world and mental construct. *Ill Fares the Land*, however, clearly highlights the distinction between what Colin MacArthur calls the *homo economicus* and the *homo celticus* (Cameron & Scullion, 1996, p. 84), between the visitor from Glasgow, who considers themselves as civilized, and the islander whom they regard as uncivilized and quaintly exotic. The title of each film also stresses the notion of a gap that separates and alienates the mainlanders from St Kilda and from the islanders.

The Edge of the World refers to the literary descriptions of the archipelago first made in the fourteenth century by the Scottish geographer John of Fordun and, in the fifteenth century, by the Scottish chronicler Walter Bower. This expression reflects the mythical qualities held by the archipelago whose position was believed to be at the edge of our known world and close to the abyss. This is an image that Powell reinforces by using Virgil's classic expression *Ultima Thule* in an introductory scrolling text. What happened to St Kilda reflects the fate of distant, secluded islands:

> The slow shadow of Death is falling upon the Outer Isles of Scotland. This is the story of one of them—and of all of them. When the Roman fleet sailed round Britain, they saw from the Orkneys a distant island in the North, like a blue haze across a hundred miles of sea. They called it—ULTIMA THULE. (*The Edge of the World*, introductory scrolling text)

14 Bill Bryden also indirectly insists on distance in his title: *Ill Fares the Land* is a line from a poem by Oliver Goldsmith, "The deserted village" published in 1770 in which the Irish poet laments rural depopulation and the abandonment of the non-profitable zones of the country by the wealthiest. Bryden, and this is one of the main issues of his film, therefore suggests that social and economic concepts are linked to the abandonment of St Kilda. This point of view is different from Powell's, for whom the motivation of the 1930 evacuation came from the islanders' wishes themselves.

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
> Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made.
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied. (Goldsmith, 1966, p. 289, ll. 51–6)

15 For Bryden, not only is distance geographical and cultural, but the concept of remoteness also refers to structural and conceptual discrepancies between two societies. The contact zone between the archipelago and the mainland is best symbolized by various characters and their experience. One of them is Willie MacDonald, a middle-aged man born and bred on St Kilda but who emigrated to Glasgow for work. Having one foot in both worlds, he can therefore be described as a physical embodiment of the contact zone. He comes back time and time again to his community and dies on Dùn, one of the islands of the archipelago, his death being described as a suicide. One of the recurrent questions the St Kildans ask Willie MacDonald is: "What's it like in Glasgow?" The Scottish metropolis bears a nearly magical status for them, not only because of its distance with the archipelago but also because of its size, its puzzling social organization and the monetary system that seems to underlie it. Bryden is eager to show that money, by the end of the nineteenth century, had made its way into the St Kildans' way of life: we see the natives counting the change given by tourists for eggs or tweed. But it was still considered by many as incomprehensible and somehow exotic practice, as goods on St Kilda were not bought but bartered by the locals. Bryden plays on this discrepancy between the mainland and the island and shows that what is entailed by "wages", that is to say being paid for work, seems frightening to most St Kildans: it is contrary to their ancestral conceptions of work or life [29'26]. However, what Willie confesses as his most shocking experience about life in Glasgow does not concern social organization: it is the fundamental ethological principle of perceiving the world. He is disconcerted by the endless deafening racket that rocks life in the city, as opposed to the nocturnal silence, the diurnal bird cries and the soothing sound of the waves. Glasgow, in the literature about

St Kilda, was always used as a point of reference in order to gauge the social distance between the mainlanders and the islanders. Martin (1703, pp. 296–99) was the first to mention, as an anecdote in a second travel writing book about the Hebrides, a St Kildan visiting Glasgow and being struck by the differences between his native island and the city. The necessity to change is underlined by Willie who confesses that he once attended a lecture on St Kilda. This was entitled "Living in the past" and he knows that they need to move on while being careful not to lose the identity forged by their archipelago. This is the paradox that they need to solve, but that seems totally irreconcilable.

> (Willie MacDonald): It's all changing, Finlay, *we* must change.
> (Finlay Gillies): What keeps you coming back then?
> (Willie MacDonald): Oh, Finlay, there's no... place like it. [28'30]

16 Bryden has two scenes with Willie in Glasgow, one in a pub and the other one in his flat, but St Kilda always is in the background: either explicitly, as an article in the newspaper, or implicitly: a close-up, for instance, shows Willie playing with a boat while his children take a bath. But once back on St Kilda, and in order to illustrate his point of view about the need to make changes to the island, Willie organizes the screening of a Charlie Chaplin film followed by a film about St Kilda: he shows baffled St Kildans Robello's 1923 documentary. While laughing when they see and recognize themselves on screen, the St Kildans come to realize that they have become mere entertainment for the mainlanders and that their days are numbered. What Willie does correspond indeed to what Mary Louise Pratt (1992, p. 7) defines as autoethnography: "I use these terms to refer to instances in which the colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms." Willie's suicide should also be understood as his realization that he has participated, willingly or not, in this change and has himself contributed to the perception of St Kilda as an anachronistic society whose days are numbered.

17 The other embodiment of the contact zone between mainlanders and islanders, and Willie MacDonald's exact counterpoint, is the aforementioned nurse, Williamina Barclay. Bryden's wish to tell the story of St Kilda as accurately as possible is once again testified to as Mrs Barclay was the current nurse when the evacuation took place. Her role in bringing about this event is regarded as essential: she is from the mainland and considers the repatriation of the inhabitants of St Kilda as her mission. Her presence exemplifies the impact of the blow that the mainland is about to deal to the islanders' ancient ways of life. When we first discover her in the village graveyard, attending the burial of four victims of the flu, her demeanour is a telling sign: she seems to be sneering at the villagers, thus illustrating the common prejudice against the St Kildans. The reason advanced by the nurse in the film is first and foremost medical: as a marriage was celebrated shortly before, she reckons that there will soon be a baby, and that it will be her role to assist parturition. But her intrusion in the St Kilda community is also linguistic. The polysemic verb "to deliver" is repeated a certain number of times throughout the movie, mostly by her, with various connotations such as birth, rebirth or, indeed, escape.

Evacuation and the voice of the St Kildans

18 Both films offer similar opening and concluding scenes: they start on bird's eye view sequences introducing the remote setting, with beautiful images of the crags jutting out into a tempestuous sea, thus highlighting the isolation of the location and contrasting the perils with the picturesque. Death abruptly ends these sequences: in *The Edge of the World*, it is a bird of prey shot down by the English tourist. In *Ills Fare the Land* it is a rowing boat bringing back a dead man to a grieving St Kilda community. But both films end with sequences of the exile of the last thirty-six inhabitants of the island and images of death. In *The Edge of the World* it is Peter Manson, Ruth and Robbie's father, who falls to his death while the St Kildans board the boat that will take them to the mainland. Peter Manson's death while climbing down a cliff to fetch a guillemot egg is suggested with an intense sequence in which there is a succession of tilt shots, low-angle shots and high-angle shots, suggesting the frailty of human beings in this awe-inspiring natural setting. But apart from non-diegetic music, the concluding scenes are speechless in both movies. Only the minister and James Gray can be heard repeatedly calling Peter Manson's name in *The Edge of the World*, the void and immensity of the area echoing the name. Directors therefore cast a doubt on what the St Kildans will have to say about their life on the island. Bleakness, death and silence are therefore the very last impressions left on the spectators. The opposition between the opening and closing scenes are striking in terms of cinematic representations: from the sunny, beautiful and peaceful natural setting to the downcast and poignant preparation for departure on a gloomy day, and then the crossing or deaths. The message conveyed seems clearly to be a fall from grace.

19 The community voice is, however, repeatedly heard in both films as their directors chose symbolic key scenes known as "The Parliament" to explain why such the decision to evacuate was consciously taken by a St Kildan society close to disintegration. What was known as "The St Kilda Parliament" were regular open-air meetings of all the male islanders to discuss work distribution and decide on the week's proceedings. This organizational feature of the island's domestic life was extensively described and led to various accounts by spellbound travel writers who saw in these parliaments a vivid characteristic of the Noble Savage peculiarities of the St Kildans. The directors draw on these accounts and insist on the democratic process of these meetings where the villagers sit in a circle, amidst beautiful scenery. Young people express their desire to emigrate and some of the elders underline the fact that this would threaten the precarious balance of life on the island. However, the response put forward by the directors is that the first reason why they cannot remain on the island is economic. Bill Bryden is careful to show that the arrival of tourists is a key feature in disrupting the local economy and their relationships to the external world. Steamboats made travelling faster and safer, and that started waves of excursions to the Scottish Hebrides, from Glasgow or Liverpool. Tourists bring in new economic dimensions, being ready to buy local products and, therefore, introducing new concepts and the notion of currency. In *Ill Fares the Land*, tourists are also seen as ostentatiously displaying colonial attitudes and deriding social and cultural differences. In a long sequence, Bryden shows a group of well-off visitors who clearly came to St Kilda for entertainment, mocking the locals and their attire, or trying to pick up local items they can proudly parade in Glasgow. One of the tourists uses the traditional St Kildan's way

of bartering, but he swaps an apple for a piece of clothing. This may seem a very symbolic token, but this is also an authentic episode told by a travel-writer in 1875 (Sands, 1878, pp. VI and 39). The apple is an incongruous and disrupting item for people living on an island with no tree and very limited resources. The old woman who is given keeps the apple as a treasured possession in a drawer until it rots and has to be discarded, as an allegory of the future of the St Kildan society. The contact zone between the mainlanders and the islanders is thus given physical features through commercial activity: the economic dimension establishes shared elements between these peoples, but these are misunderstood.

20 The cultural differences between the British mainlanders and the islanders are magnified in the final scenes of *Ill Fares the Land*. After the minute preparations for their exile, Bryden carefully shows a kitchen table in a close up where the spectators can see a Bible open at the "Book of Exodus" and a handful of oats, a ritual apparently repeated in every house on the island. Meanwhile, Neil Gillies's voice-over slowly reads Oliver Goldsmith's poem, thus blaming depopulation on the introduction of mercantile concepts and on clashes between traditional values and external ones, although the adult voice-over later adds "It was as if we were running away", thus blaming this decision on themselves and on their lack of resourcefulness.

21 The following sequence then shows the scared islanders disembarking in Oban, on the West coast of Scotland, and being greeted with scorn and verbal abuse. They are taunted by onlookers who consider them as parasites and mentally retarded people. All these conceptions clearly collide with the concepts of the Noble Savage and illustrate the confrontation between scholarly myths and the economic reality of post-1929 Britain. Not only do the St Kildans embody a way of life that is considered backward, but their repatriation, accommodation and future employment will be provided by the British government at the expense of the taxpayers, and this appears as unacceptable to a British population confronted with the Great Depression. The last voices of St Kilda become lost voices and are not heard: the very last images of Bryden's film are American shots of some of the heartbroken St Kildans getting into vehicles while mournful non-diegetic music is played. The St Kildans peer through the windows and look terrified at what they see and at what they hear, while Gillies' adult voice-over enumerates the cause of their death, most of them succumbing from a respiratory disease, a consequence of their weak immune system. The contact with the mainland and the mainlanders being fatal to a large majority of them.

Conclusion

22 Because of a somehow sentimental vision of life on St Kilda, these films could be considered as examples of what Andrew Fleming (2005, p. 5) calls Hirtophilia: because of the simplicity and apparent ingenuousness of island life, the viewer does indeed feel drawn to St Kilda and to its inhabitants. Revealing the contact zones between islanders and mainlanders also participates in the affection the viewer feels for the St Kildans: the tense relationships, the misunderstandings and misconceptions highlight the prejudice and conspicuous lack of efforts from mainlanders that preceded the evacuation. However, these films, by showing another perspective contribute to the apprehension of life on St Kilda. Cinema, through subjective shots and an omniscient point of view, offers a distinctive focus that allows the spectator to perceive the trauma

of the abandonment of the archipelago. The St Kildans' life struggles and the eventual evacuation of the island are seen through the eyes of the natives. All the novels, poems and plays about St Kilda published in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries were written by mainlanders. The protagonist, with the exception of two novels for young adults and a book in French, half fiction and half travelogue written in 2017 (Bulliard, 2018), never is a native from St Kilda: it is invariably a visitor from the mainland, a scientist or a pastor, who describes the archipelago and talks about the local population. The voice of the St Kilda community was not often heard, and even less listened to. Apart from few fragments recovered, the only piece from a St Kildan ever published where the island is mentioned is the diary of a native who left before the 1930 evacuation to study on the mainland and who later became Pastor in Canada (Gillies, 2010). The microhistory of the place is still very much incomplete, but these films contribute, in their ways, to our understanding of existence in what was one of the most remote and inaccessible locations in Great Britain.

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ABSTRACTS

This article examines how St Kilda was depicted in the only two fictional films about life on an island that has assumed mythical status since Martin Martin's travel account (1698): Michael

Powell's *The Edge of the World* (1937) and Bill Bryden's *Ill Fares the Land* (1983). After a presentation of St Kilda, I examine the artistic and ideological objectives of the directors. I then more specifically examine how both directors represent distance and how they present the irruption of what Deleuze and Guattari called striated forces. I describe in the following part the various contact zones where islanders and mainlanders meet in the two films. The notion of St Kilda's lost voices is central to my article and allows us to see how these films tried to provide the St Kilda community with a means of expression.

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Keywords: St Kilda, Martin Martin, Michael Powell, striated fores (Deleuze and Guattari)

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